

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 26, 2009

Media Contact:

Kit Werbe
Public Information Officer
Indianapolis Department of Public Works
Office: 317.327.4669



Protecting Our Waterways: Car Washing Done Right

INDIANAPOLIS – Many drivers will be surprised to learn that the way they wash their cars can have a big impact on the environment. When you wash your car at home, the grime, gunk, oil, gas and antifreeze residue on your car mixes with the water from your hose and flows into neighborhood storm drains. This polluted water does not get treated before emptying into local streams, rivers and lakes, such as the White River or Eagle Creek.

This dirty run-off affects water quality, fish and wildlife. Detergents and soaps used to clean your car end up disturbing the oxygen in our waterways, which affects the habitat for wildlife. The gills of fish also can become coated, causing them to suffocate.

When it comes to protecting the environment, automated car washes are the ideal choice. Car washes capture the used water and send it into the sanitary sewer system. From there, the used water goes to local wastewater treatment plants to be filtered and cleaned. Or, some car wash facilities recycle and reuse the water onsite at the facility. Whatever residue is leftover is disposed at a landfill.

Car washes also have techniques for minimizing water use. They use as little as 30 gallons of water per car, while at-home washing can use two to three times as much water.

If you do choose to wash your car at home, use a biodegradable soap and wash your car in your yard, so some of the dirty water can be absorbed into the ground instead of flowing directly into storm drains and into local waterways. Another option is to use a waterless car cleaner, which is sprayed on and then wiped off using a cloth.

Next time your car needs a good scrub, consider these earth-friendly alternatives that will clean your car while helping keep our rivers, streams and lakes clean too.

Mayor Ballard launched SustainIndy and created the Office of Sustainability in October 2008. Both represent an innovative enterprise aimed at delivering long-term cost savings to the city, building the local economy, improving our quality of life and enhancing our environmental and public health. Its efforts are designed to aggressively move Indianapolis forward in making it one of the most sustainable cities in the Midwest. For more information, visit www.sustainindy.org.

###